

Good morning, my name is Claire McCall and I am a ninth grader at North Muskegon High School...

History documents how differently people in our nation have been treated, and it shows the long legacy of inequality that is still alive today. From literal chains, to the oppression of segregation, to the still apparent discrimination, the American experience has been evidently tougher for some of our citizens due to race, gender, and national origin. We must be ready and willing to help those who haven't been able to pursue the life-changing benefits of higher education as others have. Considering race and gender in college admissions reveals that we recognize and value diversity.

By considering race as a factor in admissions, colleges can look past the limited results standardized tests produce and recognize other important qualities that students bring. Certainly, I am grateful to have talented and inspired teachers who have yet again prepared me for more PSAT testing while I keep my own eyes on the prize in terms of admission to a top college. But I can only wonder about the worthy students whose schools are run down and overcrowded. Where the teachers are tired and underpaid and have no real means of bettering the students whose lives are still constrained by past hindrances. These students may have the same aspirations as I do, but challenges beyond their control keep them from achieving the dream. Affirmative action gives redress to the historically uneven application of the 14th amendment, which declares that "no state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States nor shall any state **deprive any person of life, liberty, or property**, without due process of law". Affirmative action allows admissions officers to look past narrow norms to see valued qualities such as **drive, resilience, and perseverance**. These qualities may predict a student's ability to thrive in college and in future life more accurately than an exceptional SAT score, a score often gained through rounds of expensive test preparation, a luxury unavailable to marginalized students, students who affirmative action policies seek to help.

A popular argument against affirmative action is that by looking at race and gender we engage in reverse discrimination. But undeniably our nation has committed acts that have oppressed groups of people for the long sweep of history, from the colonial era of the great plantations, to the turbulent civil rights movement of the 60's. Sadly this unfair treatment is still apparent today, and calls for the help

affirmative action brings. A couple of years ago, a group researchers conducted a study which sent out nine thousand job applications for different jobs in various cities. Four identical resumes were sent out for each job: but two of them used a typically African American name, and the other two used typical white names. The names were the only difference between the resumes. The researchers found that an applicant with an African American name was 16% less likely to get called in for an interview than an applicant with a white sounding name with the same credentials. This is solid proof that discrimination has not gone away and that affirmative action is still needed.

While the State of Michigan has banned the use of affirmative action policies in college admissions, there are many influential people who recognize the importance of affirmative action such as Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Sotomayor, who is a proud Puerto Rican woman and first generation college graduate, writes that “A place like Princeton could fill their entire beginning freshman class with students who have scored perfectly on undergraduate metrics. They don’t do this because it would not make for a diverse class on the metrics that they think are important for success in life.” While we celebrate her presence on the high court, we are aware that she is one of only three women on what is now a nine member court.

A case in 2014 named Schuette vs Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action looked at this controversial topic when U of M wanted to continue to use race and gender as factors in admittance. While the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that race and gender should not be considered- what I and other take away is that many well regarded colleges such as U of M believe in the continuation of affirmative action. Considering race and gender when selecting for college admission allows us to look at the whole person-- at the unique set of qualities they bring. We have made important progress towards equality but we are not close enough yet to do away with affirmative action policies.